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ABSTRACT

An instructional strategy designed to meet the needs of limited-English-proficient (LEP) adult students grouped heterogeneously in classes is presented. The approach is intended to assist in curriculum design and implementation in situations in which, because of limited student numbers, students in adult basic education, English as a Second Language (ESL), General Educational Development (GED), and pre-GED classes must be taught together in a single classroom. The strategy is also intended for students with the same home language. Layered instruction is the efficient introduction of new content or concepts to classes containing multiple ability groups. Students are classified by six LEP skill levels, and learning activities aimed specifically at the needs of each skill level group are introduced. Subsequently, each group works independently. The activities for each group are variations of the same activity with adjustments in language. The approach is most easily adapted for math, science, and social studies or citizenship education, but may also be used for English language arts. The guide discusses grouping of adult students, appropriate use of the method, principles and implementation of layered instruction, options for physical arrangement of students within a group, and teacher expectations. A sample lesson on voter registration is included. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Layered Instruction: Limited English Proficient Adults In A Multi-Level Classroom

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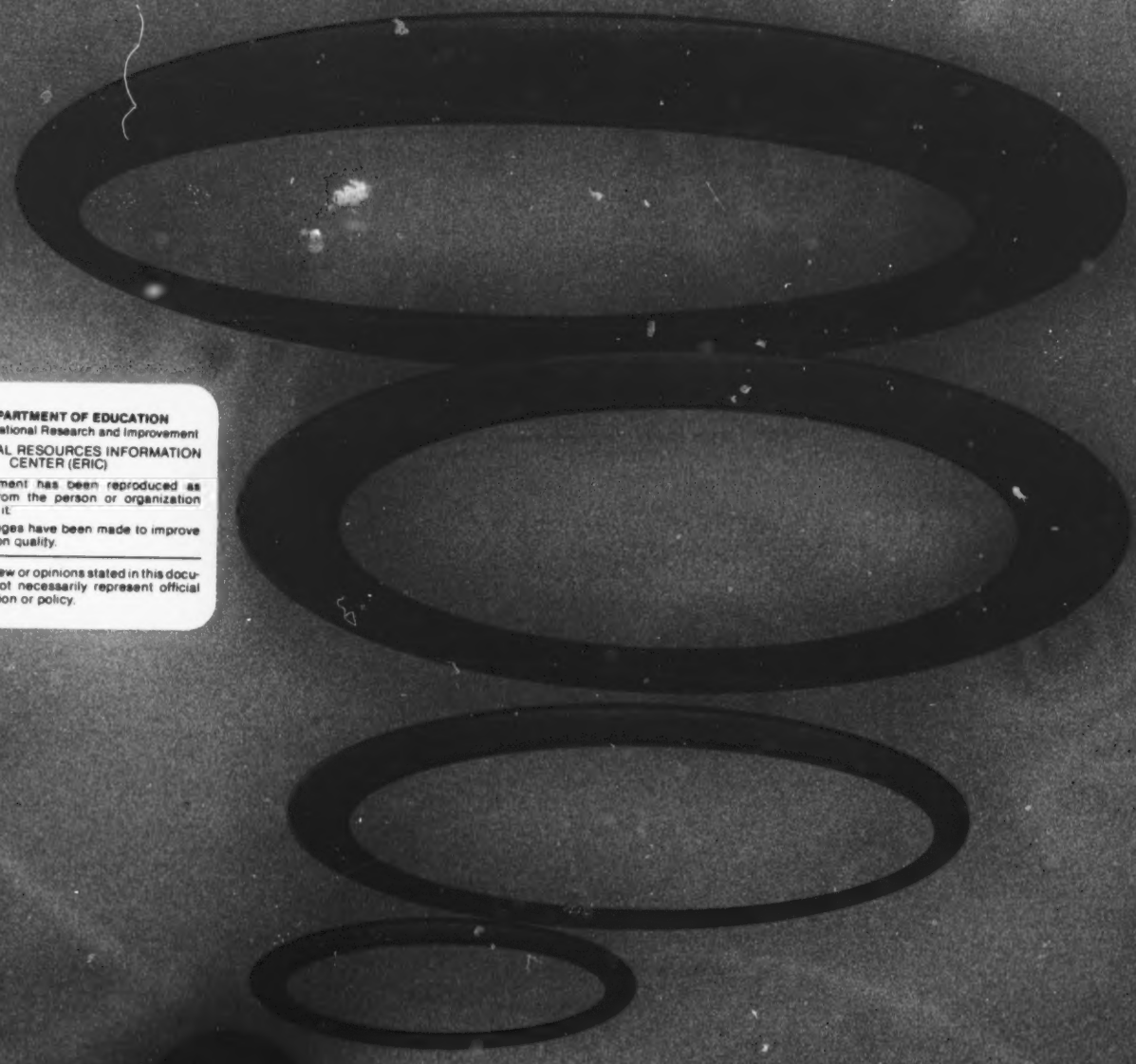

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Introduction

Adult education classes in Texas have traditionally been divided for instructional purposes into four groups: (a) Adult Basic (ABE) classes for grade levels 0-4; (b) Pre-GED or Intermediate classes for grade levels 5-8; (c) GED or Competency-Based High School Diploma (CBHSD) classes for levels 9-12; and (d) English as Second Language (ESL) classes for all students who are limited English proficient (LEP). This grouping pattern has caused some logistical problems in programs which have not had enough students to create separate classes for each of these four categories. Because of limited numbers of students, staff and very limited budgets, many programs in Texas find it necessary to group all four types of students into a single classroom. Anyone who has witnessed an Adult Education classroom containing all these ability levels is aware that in such an arrangement few teachers can meet the instructional needs of all their students.

Additional problems for LEP adults are inherent in this grouping practice. Placing all such students in a class for ESL instruction fails to consider the fact that often the academic levels of LEP adults range from college graduates and licensed professionals (in their first language) to persons who have no literacy skill in their home language. This grouping scheme also fails to address the needs of adults who aspire to improve their English skills *and* achieve a GED, CBHSD, or other academic goals. When students of varying levels of English proficiency are in the same class, the predicament of those of lowest English proficiency is often aggravated by the fact that they lack even the English skills necessary to demand the teacher's attention and request help. Whenever enrollment allows for more than one class, smaller programs tend to group ABE, Pre-GED and GED-level students who are English proficient into one class, and all LEP students together in one or more ESL classes.

Following is a suggested strategy to meet these needs. It should be clarified that *this strategy is intended for ESL classes in which the adult students all share a common home language*. It is understood that *many adult ESL classes involve students of more than one language background, and a different set of strategies may be more appropriate for such groups*. However, since approximately 85-90% of all LEP adults in Texas have Spanish as their first language, and since functionally bilingual (English-Spanish) instructors are relatively easy to find, the following strategy should be feasible in a large number of adult ESL classes whether or not they are sponsored by Adult Education Co-ops. The 85-90% figure is extrapolated from the fact that 94% of all LEP students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 12 in Texas have Spanish as their first language.

Why Group Adult Education Students in ESL Classes?

Although any class of students in the real world will have some range of ability levels among its students, those classes which tend to be easiest to prepare for and to teach are those in which all of the students have about the same skill level. When the teacher of such a class plans and delivers instruction which is appropriate, that instruction is usually offered at the appropriate level of difficulty for all (or most) of the class members.

But such an ideal situation is rarely the case in ESL classes for adults, for several reasons: (a) many Adult Education programs simply don't have enough students, teachers, or aides to group and create classes of this type; (b) many programs operate on the basis of individual progress, with tutorial instruction rather than large class instruction; (c) many programs are open entry-open exit, meaning students may enter at any time, stay as long as they like, and exit at any time; and (d) some programs which operate large-class instruction in ESL lack the resources and expertise to group students realistically for effective instruction.

Even if one assumes that classes are not open entry-open exit, there is often a need to group students of wide ranging abilities. If a teacher plans and delivers lessons which are appropriate for the highest level students, then all other students in the class will become frustrated because the work is too difficult for them; if instruction is aimed at the lowest skill group, then all other levels will soon be bored because the work is too easy; if lessons are focused on the "average" student, the lower groups become frustrated while the higher groups become bored.

It should be remembered that the fact that Adult Education classes are voluntary contains both advantages and disadvantages. A major advantage is that students tend to be highly motivated because they attend class by choice; a major disadvantage is that adult students tend to be quick to stay away from classes where they feel boredom and/or frustration.

In brief, the goal of grouping for instruction is to provide lessons which are appropriate for all the skill levels a class may contain.

Appropriate Use of Layered Instruction

It should be noted that Layered Instruction is not intended to replace proven types of learning activities such as component skill drills, guided practice, language experience activities, inquiry/discovery lessons, etc. The most appropriate use of Layered Instruction is the efficient and effective introduction of new content or concepts to classes containing multiple ability level groups. Since a major portion of instructional time in any class must be devoted to the task of presenting new material, any strategy which streamlines that task will necessarily enhance students' longterm skill and concept gains.

The reader should also be careful not to confuse Layered Instruction with heterogeneous grouping strategies. Those strategies tend to focus on multiple objectives which are directly linked to successful completion of group projects, improvement of students' social interaction skills, etc.

The Crucial First Step

For grouped instruction to succeed, it is absolutely essential that a teacher realistically identify the kinds of students in a class. Since getting to know each student well requires time and exposure of teacher to student, the best way to accomplish this task quickly is for teachers to be aware of the main types of skill levels which students typically possess in adult ESL class. Once all students are identified by skill levels, they can be grouped with students of the same or similar levels for effective, manageable instruction.

The following is a set of categories, or skill level descriptions which should effectively identify the levels of approximately 99% of all students in Adult ESL classes. In other words, teachers of ESL to adults will rarely encounter a student who does *not* logically fit into one of the following skill level groups:

LEP Advanced
These students have limited English skills, as well as **ACADEMIC SKILLS AT LEVELS 9-12** in their first language; they are interested in GED, CBHSD preparation.

LEP Intermediate
These students have limited English skills, and literacy, numeracy and coping skills at **LEVELS 5-8** in their native language.

LEP Basic
These students have limited English skills, and literacy/numeracy skills in their first language at grade equivalent **LEVELS 0-4.**

LEP Graduate
These students are monolingual and have completed a high level of education or professional training in their native language; **MANY ARE LICENSED OR CERTIFIED PROFESSIONALS AND LACK ONLY ENGLISH PROFICIENCY.**

LEP Pre-Literate
These students are either monolingual non-English speakers or very limited in English; they have **FEW OR NO LITERACY SKILLS IN THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE, AND MAY HAVE NO PREVIOUS SCHOOL EXPERIENCE.**

LEP Pre-Literate, Non-Roman
These student have limited English skills, literacy/numeracy skills in their first language at levels 0-4, and they come from a culture or background which provides them NO EXPERIENCE WITH THE ROMAN ALPHABET. *Note* that this category would be appropriate only for an entire ESL class of speakers of Arabic or Vietnamese, for example.

A = LEP Advanced

I = LEP Intermediate

B = LEP Basic

G = LEP Graduate

P = LEP Pre-Literate

P-N = LEP Pre-Literate, Non-Roman

These categories also parallel the categories for ESL classes in the secondary grades of Texas public schools which are detailed in the Texas Education Agency's Guidelines for Language Usage in Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language Programs, below:

ESL Student Categories (Grade PK-12)

Category ESL 1
These LEP students are monolingual speakers of other languages and are considered beginning English speakers.

Category ESL 2
These LEP students have some oral English skills, score below the 23rd percentile at Grades 2 through 12 on a state approved standardized achievement test.

Category ESL 3
These LEP students have scored at a level to be considered orally proficient in English, but score between the 23rd and 40th percentile at Grades 2 through 12 on a state approved standardized achievement test.

Category ESL 4
These LEP students are enrolling beyond Grade one without previous schooling.

Principles of Layered Instruction

Although Layered Instruction may appear chaotic at first glance, the following points must be remembered to understand and effectively implement this process of teaching ESL:

- Layered Instruction involves, first, arranging these skill groups of adult ESL students into a sequence which begins with the group with the *greatest English proficiency (the LEP Advanced Group)* and ends with the group with the *least English proficiency* (the LEP Pre-Literates and/or LEP Pre-Literate, Non-

Roman Group). Second, the process involves teaching a learning activity which is aimed specifically at the needs of each skill level group in the sequence. The order in which these categories should be sequenced is as follows:

Skill Groups
- First—LEP Advanced
- Second—LEP Intermediate
- Third—LEP Basic
- Fourth—LEP Graduate
- Fifth—LEP Pre-Literate/LEP Pre-Literate, Non-Roman

- After the presentation is focused on each group, that group should be prepared to work independently.

- The fact that Layered Instruction involves focusing a learning activity for each skill group does *not* mean that an ESL class with all five skill groups would require a teacher to prepare five different activities; *rather, a teacher must prepare to present one activity in five different ways, by adjusting the language used to present that activity to each skill group.* Following are some suggested ways to adjust the language of presentation to make the activity understandable for each group:

  - LEP Advanced—a mini-ESL lesson on key vocabulary and concepts in isolation
  - LEP Intermediate—reinforcement of key concepts and ideas in English/first language (as needed), plus clarification of instructions and expectations in first language (as needed)
  - LEP Basic—explanation of key concepts and content in first language with more context

  In contrast, LEP Graduate, LEP Pre-Literates and LEP Pre-Literate Non-Roman students require greater emphasis on vocabulary, grammatical structure, and more elaborate contextual explanations in first language

- For Layered Instruction to be effective in an ESL class (at least until teacher and students become comfortable with the process), both the teacher and the students must know what to expect at each stage of the process, as well as what they are expected to do at each stage in the lesson sequence. Students should be told the following things to make the process work well:

  - If you don't understand the lesson immediately, be patient; you will understand clearly before the class is over;
  - while you are waiting for the teacher to tell you about the lesson in language you understand clearly, try to figure out the lesson from the explanation intended for higher skill groups;
  - relax, but be alert to see what you can learn. The explanations aimed at higher skill groups provide an excellent opportunity for you to adjust your comprehension skills to the speed and pronunciation of persons who are more proficient in English. (Later explanations of the lesson will provide the students with additional chances to either confirm or correct their best guesses about what they have heard early in the lesson);
  - each of you is responsible for adding something to the knowledge of the class: advanced students are responsible for assisting students in lower skill groups, and students in lower skill groups are responsible for sharing cultural and language traditions and perspectives with other students and with the teacher.

- The Layered Instruction process lends itself most naturally to teaching the content areas of math, science, social studies, (or citizenship for Amnesty classes), but can also be used effectively for English language arts when teacher and students understand the process.

- The sequence used in Layered Instruction may seem to be the exact opposite of what is needed at first, mainly because some other grouping strategies begin by addressing the simplest component skills of a task and then moving to combine simple tasks to reach higher levels of complexity. In contrast, Layered Instruction works by expecting LEP students to formulate assumptions about

messages in English which go beyond their level(s) of English proficiency; it then provides a low-stress opportunity to confirm or correct those assumptions. In other words, the sequence simulates realistic demands for English comprehension from everyday life and then provides extra opportunities to comprehend correctly.

- Possibly the only alternative to Layered Instruction for adult ESL teachers with multilevel classes who hope to meet the needs of all their students is to prepare at least one activity per skill-level group for each class, then attempt to respond as students from all groups simultaneously request explanations, clarifications, or other kinds of help.

Implementation

Implementing the process involves the following steps.

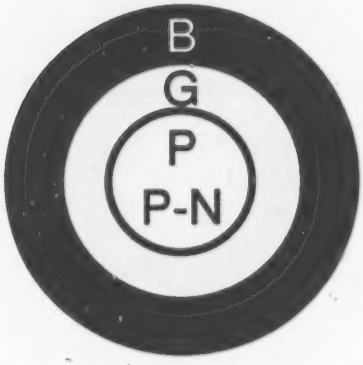
Before instruction.
Determine the appropriate LEP category for each LEP adult in class. Simply read all LEP categories carefully then decide which category most accurately describes each student. (Note that a student's category may be changed at any time as the teacher learns more about him/her, or as English proficiency and/or academic skills improve.) Probably the best method for determining a student's appropriate category placement involves interviewing the student in his first language about his background and previous schooling (if any), and a brief statement written by the student (if he can write) about his life experiences. Both of these processes will allow the teacher to understand each student better and establish a one-to-one relationship. They also provide the teacher with input to diagnose a student's approximate level of native language ability (and English where appropriate) in the skill areas of comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing. Although these procedures don't directly test a student's oral comprehension or reading skills, it is reasonable to assume that any student who can respond appropriately either orally or in writing has accurately comprehended the task requested of him, whether that request was oral or written. Teachers may also adapt questions and/or tasks from English language placement tests to determine an LEP student's approximate grade level equivalency.*

First presentation of the lesson.
The first explanation of the instructional activity should be aimed directly at meeting the needs of students in the LEP Advanced category such as a mini-lesson on key vocabulary. Note that all ESL students in the class are included in this activity, although only LEP Advanced students are expected to respond and perform. Once the activity has been explained, modeled, and directed by the teacher, LEP Advanced students should be prepared to continue the lesson's main activity independently. At that point, the remaining groups are ready for the next step.

*For a detailed explanation of assessment possibilities, see *Assessment of Limited English Proficient Adults: A Guide to Available Instruments.*

Second presentation of the lesson.
The second explanation of the instructional activity should be focused specifically on the needs of students in the LEP Intermediate Category. (See Principles of Layered Instruction, LEP Intermediate Category, page 3.) Again, *all* ESL students *except LEP Advanced* listen to and observe this activity, but only LEP Intermediate students are expected to respond and perform. Such a process allows those adults with the lowest English proficiency and/or academic skills to be exposed to fluent speech from the teacher and to witness responses modeled by students of higher proficiency and skill levels. After the activity and its goals have been explained, modeled, and clarified by the teacher, the LEP Intermediate group should be prepared to work independently as the teacher offers the next presentation of the activity to the remaining groups.

Third presentation of the lesson.
Instructional focus is on the needs of LEP Basic students. Repeat the process as described above, eliminating the most proficient group from direct participation with each step.



Fourth presentation of the lesson.
Instructional focus is on LEP Graduate students. Repeat the process as described under "Second presentation of the lesson." Note that beginning with LEP Graduate students, activities must increasingly emphasize oral fluency, and oral comprehension skills, and may rely more heavily on use of students' first language.

Fifth presentation of the lesson.
Instructional focus is on LEP Pre-Literates and LEP Pre-Literate Non-Roman students. Although there are some differences in the instructional needs of these last two groups, they are sufficiently similar that they can usually be grouped together very manageably for instructional activities. Increasing emphasis should be placed on oral fluency and oral comprehension skills, as well as fundamental component skills of literacy such as phonics, the alphabet, word attack skills, etc.

Sixth presentation of the lesson.
Individual/small group reteaching should be aimed at student(s) from any skill group who for whatever reason failed to understand the concept, content, or skill being taught during the lesson for his/her category.

As the teacher moves from instruction for the group of *greatest* English proficiency and academic skills to the group of *least* English proficiency and academic skills, there will naturally be a need for greater use of students' first language to clarify content and concepts.

A Final Caution on Presentations
Should an ESL teacher skip steps in the sequence if a class contains no students from one of the mid-level categories? The answer (usually) is no, because students of lower levels of proficiency need extra exposures to the target language to increase fluency. Therefore, such a class should be taught as if it contained students from all LEP categories. The effect is that students in lower categories get the extra exposures to the lesson which they need to fully internalize it.

Summary
The reader should now be able to visualize a process of instruction which systematically peels away each layer, or category of students, while the teacher gives repeated instruction to an increasingly smaller group of students who most need extra exposure to the target language. When properly implemented, layered instruction can reserve an equitable portion of the teacher's time and attention for students of low proficiency and skills, while enhancing the teacher's ability to manage instruction effectively for students in all skill levels.

An Overview of Layered Instruction

Student Skill Level Categories	English Lang. Skills	Native Language		Skill Level	Layered Instruction Language Adjustments
		Academic Skills	(Literacy, Numeracy, Coping Skills, etc.)		
A. LEP Advanced	Limited	9-12	N/A	1st	• Mini-ESL lesson on key vocabulary and concepts in isolation
I. LEP Intermediate	Limited	N/A	5-8	2nd	• Reinforcement of key concepts and ideas in English/1st language as needed. • Classification of instructions and expectations in 1st language, (as needed)
B. LEP Basic	Limited	N/A	0-4	3rd	• Explanation of key concepts and content in 1st language with more context

G. LEP Graduate	None	High Level Educational or Professional Training	N/A	4th	• Greater emphasis:
					  • Vocabulary
					  • Grammatical structure
					• More elaborate contextual explanations in 1st language
					(The lower a student's English proficiency level, the more explanation and context needed.)

P. LEP Pre-Literate	None or Limited	None or Limited	0-4	5th	
PN. LEP Pre-Literate Non-Roman	None or Limited	N/A	0-4	5th	

A Description of Layered Instruction As Applied to a Lesson on Voter Registration

First presentation of the lesson.
This teaching activity is aimed directly at the needs of LEP Advanced students. It involves a mini ESL lesson which isolates key vocabulary and concepts from the lesson and presents brief, simplified definitions of those terms before students are asked to apply them in an activity. Key terms to be addressed may include some of the following:

1. Ballot
2. Candidate
3. Literacy test
4. Vote
5. Qualified voter
6. Citizen/naturalized citizen
7. Permanent residence
8. Register/registration
9. Certificate
10. County
11. Valid
12. Expire
13. Residency requirement
14. Receipt
15. Precinct
16. Primary
17. Election/General Election
18. Affidavit
19. Transfer

At the end of the mini-lesson, LEP Advanced students should be prepared to perform an independent activity applying the terms above. A typical independent activity might involve a worksheet which requires students to apply terms from the list above to a given situation or task.

Second presentation of the lesson.
This explanation is aimed directly at the needs of LEP Intermediate students. It involves reinforcement of the terms mentioned above in Presentation 1, using a combination of English and the students' first language as needed. At this point, careful attention to students' reactions and nonverbal signals *during* the explanation is crucial if the teacher is to be able to switch languages appropriately. This segment should also involve clarification of instructions and expectations in either language for the coming independent work, as needed by particular students.

At the end of this segment, LEP Intermediate students should be prepared to work on an independent task based on this reteach.

Third presentation of the lesson.
This explanation is aimed directly at the needs of LEP Basic students. It involves another explanation of the key terms listed above in Presentation 2, but this time in the students' first language and with explanation and context.

Again, by the end of this segment, LEP Basic students should be prepared to work independently with the key terms.

Fourth presentation of the lesson.
This explanation is aimed directly at the needs of LEP Graduate students. Again the key terms are found in Presentation 1, and this reteaching segment involves a more detailed explanation in the students' first language, with more context, more examples and more grammatical explanation. As with other groups, LEP Graduate students will be ready for independent work after this reteach.

Fifth explanation of the lesson.
This activity is aimed at the needs of LEP Pre-Literate students (again using the student's first language). Although the key terms are the same as those listed above in Presentation 1, the teacher must carefully

(and *tactfully*) check to make certain that LEP Pre-Literate students have command of component concepts for some terms. For example:

Qualified voter
- voter
- qualified

Naturalized citizen
- citizen
- naturalized

Permanent resident
- residence
- permanent

Literacy test
- test
- literacy

Etc.

The teacher must constantly be sensitive to individual students' deficits in skills and/or experiences, and must be careful to provide them with missing skills and concepts without causing embarrassment. The teacher must also endeavor to learn more about both the general culture of the students and the mores of specific geographical areas of students' origins. This latter sensitivity will help the teacher learn just how much lack of knowledge or understanding (if any) a particular culture or subculture allows its adult members to publicly acknowledge.

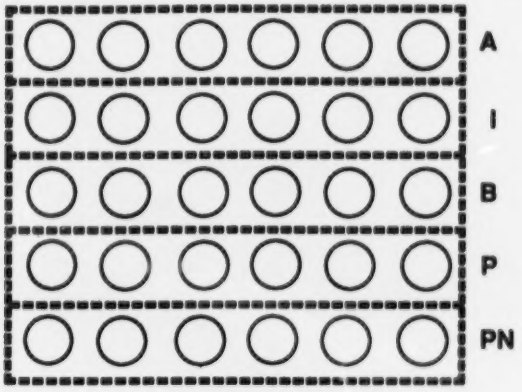
Sixth explanation of the lesson.
Teacher provides individual or small group reteaching to student(s) in any category as needed for understanding. As both the teacher and students become accustomed to the process of Layered Instruction, several things start to happen: lessons progress more smoothly, because all participants learn what to expect; lessons which initially involved separate, discrete stages become "blurred" as they move from one reteach to another; and students as well as the teacher relax and work together more effectively because they realize that Layered Instruction regularly allows every student to receive the level of instruction and number of exposures he/she needs for mastery of the lesson.

Some Options for Physical Arrangement of Groups Within a Classroom

Option I (for relatively equal numbers of students in each category)

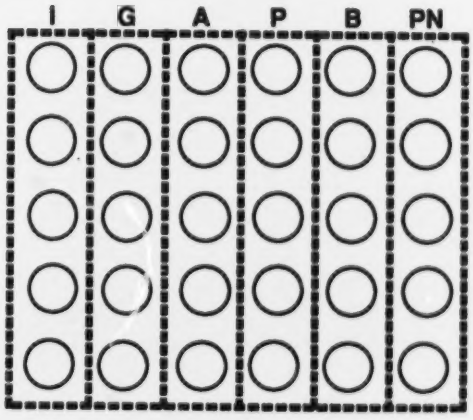
Notice that this arrangement places the most proficient students in the back of the room and those with the lowest proficiency in the front. With this plan, a teacher can "peel off" layers either by moving forward or back, or by simply lowering his/her voice.

Option I (for relatively equal numbers of students in each category)
Teacher moves back a row after each presentation of the lesson



Teacher
(facing class)

Option II (for relatively equal groups in all categories)

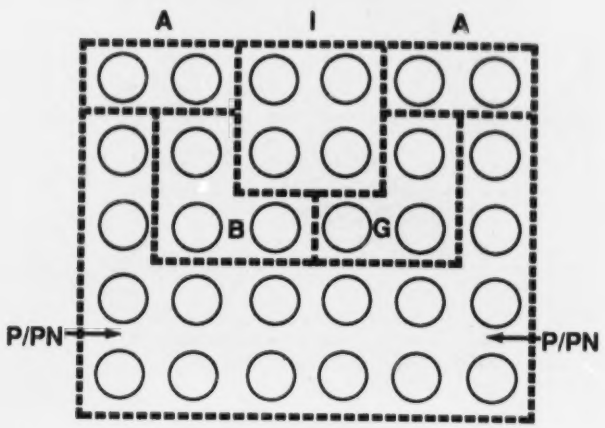


Teacher
(facing class)

Option II (for relatively equal groups in all categories)

This arrangement's principal strength is that all students in the lower proficiency categories (i.e., G, P, & PN) have access to peer assistance from students in the higher proficiency categories (i.e., A, I, & B) on one or both sides of them. Its biggest disadvantage is that categories are difficult to isolate for special work or reteaching.

Option III (for large numbers of Preliterates/Preliterate-Non-Romans)



Teacher
(facing class)

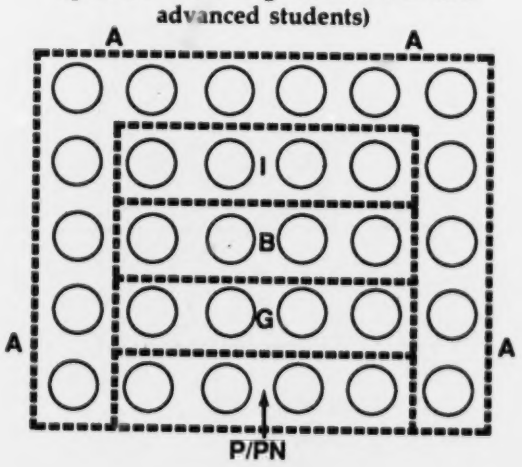
Option III (for large numbers of Preliterates/ Preliterate-Non-Romans)

The main advantages of Option III are: (a) the highest proficiency students are farthest from the teacher and the lowest are nearest; and (b) this plan optimizes exposure of lower proficiency students to peer assistance from higher proficiency students.

Option IV (for large numbers of LEP advantaged students)

Although actual numbers of students in each category limit the types of arrangements one can use, two themes are constant: (a) weaker students are nearest the teacher, and (b) all lower level students sit near higher level students, facilitating peer assistance.

Option IV (for large numbers of LEP advanced students)

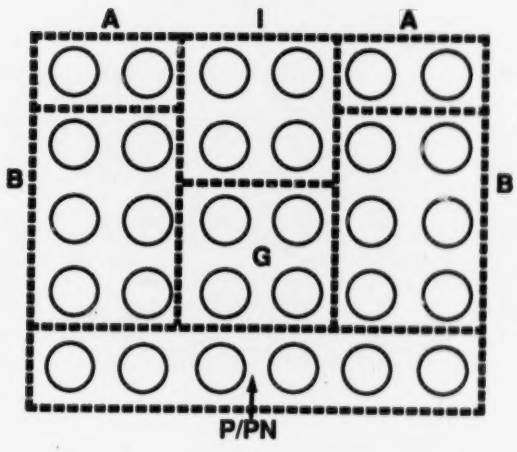


Teacher
(facing class)

Option V (for larger numbers of Basic students)

Possible combinations of LEP categories within one class are almost without limit. The possible arrangements which allow lower proficiency students to be near the teacher and near the more proficient peers for frequent help are also extremely varied. Option V illustrates one possibility.

Option V (for larger numbers of Basic students)



Teacher
(facing class)

Conclusion: Layered Instruction and Teacher Expectations

When correctly implementing the process of Layered Instruction a teacher will develop lesson plans with objectives *for the entire class* which are based on expectations for the *most* proficient category of students. The process then allows students at lower levels to understand and complete that same objective, after hearing the lesson explained repeatedly (in both the target language and his/her mother tongue). In other words, it is literally true that adequate instruction of LEP students does *not* require lowered expectations.

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; TITLE IX, 1973 EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; AND VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED IN 1974.

It is the policy of the Texas Education Agency to comply fully with the nondiscrimination provisions of all federal and state laws and regulations by assuring that no person shall be excluded from consideration for recruitment, selection, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action, or be denied any benefits or participation in any programs or activities which it operates on the grounds of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, handicap, age, or veteran status (except where age, sex, or handicap constitute a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to proper and efficient administration). The Texas Education Agency makes positive efforts to employ and advance in employment all protected groups.

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